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to a complicated figure such as a whale, and in that case an expert dancer among the guests is called upon to perform. It is announced that this is, "to make clean the road for the dead."

After each masked figure has disappeared, the sound of whistling from without grows gradually weaker, as the apparition returns whence it came. In solemn silence X takes a copper[21] which he has had in readiness, breaks it across his knee,[22] and throws it either into the fire or down on the ground in the track that the figure has taken. Then the announcer calls out loudly:

"It is for his crest.[23] It has 'made bone for the dead.'" Then he continues, speaking for X and using the first person:

"My heart is glad at seeing my father.[24] At death he returned back on the path of my family's ancestors and donned our ancient crest. He now lives in *Nusmät·a*, whence he came to visit us and whither he has now gone back."

The significance of the throwing down of a copper is entirely unknown to the modern Bella Coola, although they still perform the ritual. In some vague way it is felt that "bone," which may imply *stability*, has been provided for the deceased. The act thus appears in the light of an offering to the dead, but this sentiment is not clearly appreciated by the participants in the rite; the present has been made *for*, rather than *to*, the one being mourned.

The copper, now valueless, is picked up by any chief and given to a poor man.

After a short interval a number of youths begin to distribute presents, provided by X, which have been placed in readiness. Gifts of equal value are given to all foreign male guests; while the women receive ones less valuable. These presents

[21] One of the plaques of native copper, such as were formerly beaten out cold and used as tokens of value by the coast tribes of British Columbia. Their employment by the Bella Coola will be described later in greater detail (I, p. 252).

[22] The breaking is sometimes omitted.

[23] That is: "For the dead man, now in form of his crest."

[24] Or whatever relative the deceased may have been.

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435 immediately before, or during the early stages of a potlatch, in
*556 order to receive goods immediately, but with the proviso that
it shall be returned to him for throwing into the fire. This
[432] method has the advantage of providing the chief with goods
[426] when required, and doubles the worth of the copper.

Coppers are not always rescued from the ashes and given to poor men. If one is still lying in the fire after several days,
[764] the donor of the potlatch removes it and fastens it to the memorial-post over the grave of his deceased relative. It may be left there, or another chief wanting a copper may buy it from the donor and increase its value in the usual manner. Only a small price is paid in such circumstances, since the copper, having served its purpose, is practically valueless.

177 The Bella Coola state that in ancient times coppers were
worth less than at present, and that the change in sentiment
435 regarding them is due to Kwakiutl influence. All agree that
*556 the value placed upon them at Fort Rupert and Alert Bay is
greater than elsewhere on the coast. The Bella Coola believe that the Kwakiutl distribute presents in respect to their coppers and that their values mount to enormous sums when the gifts are returned. It is clear that the importance of coppers, like the potlatch and other elements of culture, has increased in recent years through the influence of the coastal tribes.

*556 It is almost impossible to define coppers in the nomenclature of economic theory. They are not mere articles of barter, since they have no practical use outside the ceremonies of chiefs. Nor are they standardized units of trade or cur-
[436] rency, since each differs not only from all other coppers, but also at different periods. In a sense they serve as tokens of
[211] what has been expended; representations of them may be
[532] carved and painted on totem-poles where they serve as marks of the goods which the chief has given away, but this is only
[426] a minor consideration. A copper can perhaps best be described
[435] as an investment which can be applied only to one purpose, "the making of bone for a deceased" person. It grows more valuable at every transmission in accordance with the goods ex-